NEWS

Sen. Jason Lewis, Senate approve supplemental budget to support healthcare, affordable housing, food assistance, and more

November 5, 2025 . 4:22 PM — 3 min read

Sen. Jason Lewis joined colleagues in the Senate to approve legislation that supports healthcare, affordable housing, food assistance, preparations to keep our roads free from snow and ice this winter, and more. COURTESY PHOTO/OFFICE OF SEN. JASON LEWIS

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The following was submitted by the Office of Sen. Jason Lewis:

State Sen. Jason Lewis joined his colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate to approve legislation that responsibly closes the books on Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) with a $2.3 billion supplemental budget that supports healthcare, affordable housing, food assistance, preparations to keep our roads free from snow and ice this winter, and more.

This legislation also advances several policy proposals that would ensure integrity in government operations, support the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Massachusetts, protect student access to financial aid, and decouple childhood vaccine schedules from unreliable federal standards.

“While the federal government unfortunately remains shut down for business, the Massachusetts legislature continues its commitment to supporting programs and services that residents rely on each day,” said Lewis. “This supplemental budget supports critical needs ranging from healthcare to nutritional assistance and affordable housing.”

Funding highlights of this legislation include:

• $2.04 billion for MassHealth (with a net cost to the state of $539 million after federal reimbursements) to cover rising healthcare costs.

• $75 million to support affordable rental housing through the Housing Preservation and Stabilization Trust Fund.

• $60.7 million for snow and ice removal expenses this winter.

• $18.5 million to support public health hospitals.

• $18.3 million to strengthen student financial aid assistance at Massachusetts public colleges and universities.

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• $14 million to aid people in treatment for substance use and alcohol addiction.

• $12 million to support the universal school meals program for K-12 students.

• $10 million to fund technology enhancements to SNAP in order to improve the customer experience, increase the accuracy of payments, and help avert harmful federal cuts.

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• $5 million in direct support for reproductive healthcare services.

Policy highlights of this legislation include:

• Protecting federal workers and military service members from losing their housing due to an eviction or foreclosure during a federal government shutdown.

• Establishing a Sheriff Fiscal Oversight Council to strengthen public trust by holding county sheriff's offices responsible for spending and performance metrics.

• Decoupling the state definition of "routine childhood immunizations" from federal standards to gain greater flexibility in determining childhood vaccine schedules.

• Punishing the impersonation of a federal officer as a state crime at a time when federal agents' actions are sowing controversy and disruption in local communities.

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• Establishing a Public Higher Education Student Support Fund to ensure that stipends for books and supplies remain available to low-income students.

• Granting access to former resident records from more than 25 state-run institutions — many of them now closed — for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities or mental health conditions to help provide closure for families while remaining mindful of appropriate limits for privacy and sensitive medical records.

• Assisting the implementation of the multistate Nurse Licensure Compact by facilitating fingerprint-based background checks.

• Protecting the privacy of people seeking name changes by removing the automatic requirement of a public legal notice for name-change petitions, but allowing the court to require public notice in a particular case for good cause.

• Strengthening the Health Safety Net by updating hospital assessments and increasing funding.

• Strengthening fishing violation penalties by allowing the Massachusetts Environmental Police to charge by the pound — or charge the total value of the catch up to $10,000 — when imposing fines for fishing violations.

The Senate passed the legislation on a bipartisan 39-0 roll call vote on Oct. 23, 2025. A similar version having previously been approved by the House of Representatives, a Conference Committee will now be formed to reconcile differences before the bill is sent to Gov. Maura Healey for her signature.

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Sen. Jason Lewis, Mass. Senate strengthen fair housing protections for renters, buyers

The following was submitted by the Office of Sen. Jason Lewis: State Sen. Jason Lewis joined his colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate to pass legislation that protects residents from discrimination in the housing market as the Trump administration abandons its enforcement of the federal Fair Housing Act. Illegal discrimination continues

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Winchester Select Board approves overnight parking pilot, permit fees increased

The Winchester Select Board on Feb. 23 approved an overnight parking pilot, raised building permit fees for the first time since 2021, adopted the 2026 outdoor dining policy and directed the town manager to examine reinvesting downtown-generated revenue into town center improvements. The board voted unanimously to implement the overnight

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‘Chicago: Teen Edition’ dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents “Chicago: Teen Edition,” a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. Set in the 1920s, this iconic production is sure to leave the audience wanting more. Performances will

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Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents ‘Syldason: You Are Welcome Here’

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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